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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR THE PRESS: August 4, 1964

The following is the text of the statement of Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara at a news conference Tuesday evening, August 4, 1964:

The President told the nation earlier tonight that the United States would take appropriate action in view of the unprovoked attacks in international waters on U. S. naval vessels by torpedo boats belonging to North Vietnam.

I can tell you some of the action that has already been undertaken. U. S. Naval aircraft from the Carriers TICONDEROGA and CONSTELLATION in the Bay of Tonkin area where our destroyers have undergone two deliberate attacks by the North Vietnamese have already initiated air strikes against the bases from which these PT boats have operated. Our naval aircraft have conducted strikes against certain other targets directly supporting the operation of the PT boats.

Again, in view of the unprovoked and deliberate attacks in international waters on U. S. naval vessels, the United States has taken the precaution of moving substantial military reenforcements to Southeast Asia. It is also making replacement deployments to the Western Pacific from the Continental United States.

It is not wise at the moment to identify or give the detailed strength of these movements, but I can assure you that they are appropriate to the provocation.

I would like to review, in chronological order, the two unprovoked attacks on our vessels as they were initiated by the North Vietnamese, not only on Sunday, August 2, but again today, Tuesday, August 4.

MORE

CHRONOLOGY OF FIRST ATTACK
(All times are local times at destroyer's position)

10:00 A.M., August 2

MADDOX reported observing an estimated 75 junks near her assigned patrol area off the North Vietnam coast. She reported changing her course in order to avoid the junk concentration.

12:30 P.M., August 2

MADDOX reported that three torpedo boats were on a southerly course heading toward the ship at extreme range (over 10 miles). The MADDOX at this point was about 30 miles from the coast.

2:40 P.M., August 2

MADDOX reported she was being approached by the high speed (estimated 45 to 50 knots) craft whose apparent intention was to conduct a torpedo attack and that she intended to open fire in self-defense if necessary.

3:08 P.M., August 2

MADDOX reported she was being attacked by the three PT craft. She opened fire with her five-inch battery after three warning shots failed to slow down the attackers.

3:08 P.M., August 2

The PT's continued their closing maneuvers and two of the PT's closed to 5,000 yards, each firing one torpedo. The MADDOX changed course in an evasive move and the two torpedoes passed close aboard on the starboard side (100 to 200 yards).

USS TICONDEROGA (CVA-14) advised she was sending four already airborne F-8E;s (CRUSADERS) with rockets and 20mm. ammunition to provide air cover for MADDOX.

3:21 P.M., August 2

The third PT moved up to the beam of the MADDOX and received a direct hit by a five-inch round, and at the same time dropped a torpedo into the water which was not seen to run. Machine gun fire from the PT's was directed at the MADDOX. However, there was no damage or injury to personnel. The MADDOX continued in a southerly direction to join with

MORE

the C. TURNER JOY (DD-951) as TICONDEROGA aircraft commenced attacking the PT's. ZUNI rocket runs and 20mm strafing attacks were directed against two of the PT's and they were damaged. The third PT remained dead in the water after the direct hit by the MADDOX. At 3:29 P.M., the aircraft broke off the engagement and escorted the MADDOX towards South Vietnam waters.

The C. TURNER JOY joined with the MADDOX and continued patrols in the area in international waters with carrier aircraft providing protective coverage.

MORE

Chronology of Second Attack

(All times are local time at the destroyer's position.)

After the first attack on the USS MADDOX, on Sunday, the MADDOX joined with its sister destroyer, the USS TURNER JOY, in the Gulf of Tonkin and resumed its patrol in international waters, as directed by President Johnson. The patrol was uneventful during most of the daylight hours of Tuesday, August 4.

Late afternoon, August 4, the MADDOX reported radar contact with unidentified surface vessels who were paralleling its track and the track of the TURNER JOY.

10 AM 8/4 EDT

7:40 PM, August 4. The MADDOX reported that from actions being taken by the unidentified vessels, an attack by them appeared imminent. The MADDOX was heading southeast near the center of the Gulf of Tonkin in international waters approximately 65 miles from nearest land.

8:36 PM, August 4. The MADDOX established new radar contact with two unidentified surface vessels and three unidentified aircraft. At this time, U. S. fighter aircraft were launched from the USS TICONDEROGA to rendezvous with the MADDOX and the TURNER JOY to provide protection against possible attack from the unidentified vessels and aircraft, in accordance with the President's previously issued directives.

9:08 PM, August 4. The MADDOX reported that the unidentified aircraft had disappeared from its radar screen and that the surface vessels were remaining at a distance. The U.S. aircraft from the TICONDEROGA arrived and commenced defensive patrol over the MADDOX and the TURNER JOY.

9:30 PM, August 4. Additional vessels were observed on the MADDOX radar, and these vessels began to close rapidly on the destroyer patrol at speeds in excess of 40 knots. The attacking craft continued to close rapidly from the west and south and the MADDOX reported that their intentions were evaluated as hostile.

9:52 PM, August 4. The destroyers reported that they were under continuous torpedo attack and were engaged in defensive counterfire.

10:15 PM, August 4. The destroyers reported that they had avoided torpedoes and had sunk one of the attacking craft.

(More)

10:42 PM, August 4. The destroyers reported that they had evaded additional torpedoes and had sunk another of the attacking craft. Other protective aircraft had arrived overhead, but weather and darkness were hampering their capabilities.

10:52 PM, August 4. The MADDOX reported that the destroyers were again under attack.

Midnight. The patrol reported that, even though torpedoes had been fired at them, they had suffered no hits nor casualties and that the defensive aircraft from the TICONDEROGA were illuminating the area and attacking the enemy surface craft.

12:32 AM, August 5. The patrol reported that at least two enemy craft had been sunk and that low ceilings continued to hamper the aircraft operations.

12:54 AM, August 5. The TURNER JOY reported that during the engagement, in addition to the torpedo attack, she was fired upon by automatic weapons while being illuminated by searchlights.

1:30 AM, August 5. The destroyers reported that the attacking craft had apparently broken off the engagement.

The MADDOX and TURNER JOY were directed to resume their patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin at daylight on the 5th of August.

END

ANNOTATED EXTRACT FOLLOWS

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Chronology of Second Attack

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1 7:40 A., August 4. The MADDOX reported that from actions being taken by the unidentified vessels, an attack by them appeared imminent. The MADDOX was heading southeast near the center of the Gulf of Tonkin in international waters approximately 65 miles from nearest land. CTG 72.1 msg 041240Z received 041348Z 08-3 EDT

2 8:36 A., August 4. The MADDOX established new radar contact with two unidentified surface vessels and three unidentified aircraft. At this time, U. S. fighter aircraft were launched from the USS TICONDEROGA to rendezvous with the MADDOX and the TURNER JOY to provide protection against possible attack from the unidentified vessels and aircraft, in accordance with the President's previously issued directives.

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CTG 77.5 msg 041406Z received 041504Z 1104 EDT

4 9:30 A., August 4. Additional vessels were observed on the MADDOX radar, and these vessels began to close rapidly on the destroyer patrol at speeds in excess of 40 knots. The attacking craft continued to close rapidly from the west and south and the MADDOX reported that their intentions were evaluated as hostile. CTG 77.5 msg 041434Z received 041520Z 1120 EDT

5 9:52 A., August 4. The destroyers reported that they were under continuous torpedo attack and were engaged in defensive counterfire. CTG 72.1 msg 041442Z received 041539Z 1139 EDT CTG 72.1 msg 041452Z received 041542Z 1142 EDT

6 10:15 A., August 4. The destroyers reported that they had avoided torpedoes and had sunk one of the attacking craft. CTG 72.1 msg 041515Z received 041602Z. This same information was received by telephone at 041552Z. 1202 EDT 1152 EDT

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10:42 A.M., August 4. The destroyers reported that they had evaded additional torpedoes and had sunk another of the attacking craft. Other protective aircraft had arrived overhead, but weather and darkness were hampering their capabilities. CTG 72.1 msg 041542Z received 041637Z. Same info by phone 041622Z.

10:52 A.M., August 4. The MADDOX reported that the destroyers were again under attack. NAVCOMSTA PHIL msg 041550Z received 041824Z

1137 EDT 1122 EDT 1224 EDT

12:00 Noon August. The patrol reported that, even though torpedoes had been fired at them, they had suffered no hits nor casualties and that the defensive aircraft from the TICONDEROGA were illuminating the area and attacking the enemy surface craft. CTG 77.5 msg 041600Z received 041746Z.

1345 EDT

12:32 A.M., August 5. The patrol reported that at least two enemy craft had been sunk and that low ceilings continued to hamper the aircraft operations.

12:54 A.M., August 5. The TURNER JOY reported that during the engagement, in addition to the torpedo attack, she was fired upon by automatic weapons while being illuminated by searchlights.

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The MADDOX and TURNER JOY were directed to resume their patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin at daylight on the 5th of August.

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